

SUMMARY

Mr. William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence

11/19/73

I. Introductory Remarks

Mr. Colby began his informal remarks by addressing the dilemma of maintaining secrecy in a free society: "we are going to have to run an American intelligence service," but it must be "different from others." It has no domestic responsibility, and it is more open than its counterparts in Britain, France, Sweden, or anywhere else. Indeed, the CIA's constant exposure in the press makes it difficult to conduct liaison with foreign intelligence services and to recruit agents. It can also effect our use of such technical collection methods as cryptography and photography.

Colby then traced the history of intelligence in the U.S. He pointed out that the government invariably constructed an intelligence system in wartime, then dissolved it afterwards. It took the advent of the Cold War to produce a peacetime intelligence apparatus. The National Security Act of 1947 established the CIA and gave it the responsibility to draw together information collected by other services and Departments. In addition, the CIA was given the authority to conduct certain services of common concern and, as directed by the National Security Council, "other functions related to intelligence", such as clandestine collection operations abroad as well as paramilitary and political operations.

According to Colby, intelligence has come of age but must prove its usefulness in a period of detente and lessened tensions overseas. He believes that intelligence has become an essential part of the conduct of foreign policy but that those in the intelligence business must work hard to make the system work. Colby explained that his responsibility for coordinating and managing the intelligence community was important, but less so than his responsibility for producing substantive intelligence... "to be able to inform the President, the NSC, the appropriate committees of Congress and so forth, of what is happening in the world." He added that, if he could focus on the substance and get the entire community also focussed on substantive questions, he would be in the best position to allocate resources and to measure the effectiveness of different techniques of collection, processing, and analysis.

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Colby pointed out that the intelligence community must develop a systematic way to evaluate the usefulness of its products to its customers. He said that he would put his major effort into identifying the key substantive problems and evaluating how well the community handles them.

Colby added some general remarks about the entire intelligence process. Collection of information includes listening to Radio Moscow, planting bugs, etc. Processing the information is also very complicated, sometimes involving highly technical work. "You really wouldn't believe what some of those engineers can get out of small little squiggles that come out of the airwaves." The last part of the process is "the production or presentation problem... It doesn't do any good for the intelligence community to know the answers and even to write a very learned tome giving the answers, if the tome is in a fashion that cannot be absorbed and actually used by the fellows making the decisions."

II. General Discussion

a. The Reputation and Image of Intelligence

Chairman Murphy asked what was being done, or should be done, to give the word "intelligence" a better reputation. Mr. Colby replied that a full scale public relations campaign was not the answer. Rather the CIA should concentrate on doing its work well and, whenever possible, on educating people about the real nature of the intelligence process.

Mr. Casey pointed out that the public should be told about the importance of the research and analysis function and about the number of Ph.D's and other specialists who work on intelligence. Colby replied that the CIA encourages its personnel to belong to professional societies and to attend conferences, and that it is moving in the direction of producing more unclassified publications. He added that the CIA should do more work in an unclassified form.

b. Congressional Oversight and Substantive Briefings

Senator Mansfield asked Colby whether he favored creation of a Joint Congressional Committee on Intelligence to throw a protective shield around the CIA and to keep Congress informed about crisis situations. Colby replied that the CIA "has always taken the position that we will handle our relations with Congress in any way that Congress

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wants us to." He later remarked that the Congressional oversight committees have been very responsible and "have been given the most sensitive kinds of information... We have never had a leak from them."

Colby explained that the CIA handles its relationship with Congress on three levels: unclassified briefings; substantive briefings, with classified material, for a number of committees and for individual members; and a discussion of operational matters with the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate. In the last few years of Senator Russell's rule over the Armed Services Committee, Senator Mansfield and two other members of the Foreign Relations Committee were also invited to participate in the oversight hearings.

Dr. Abshire pointed out that there should be a better system for giving substantive information to interested members. Colby said that the CIA does brief individual Congressmen and Senators upon request and that he had committed himself in his confirmation hearing to be even more responsive in this area. He said, "I have some people looking now at a way to do this on a regular, periodic basis... It will...push some of this material towards them that they really might not know they want to know." Dr. Abshire suggested that, every six weeks, intelligence briefers might give interested members of Congress a general rundown of world events and stress emerging problems. Colby said he would be delighted with this approach.

Dr. Abshire then asked Colby for his views on Senator Cooper's bill about National Intelligence Estimates being made available to Congress. Colby replied that briefings of Congress are often based on NIE's, but that he was concerned about the physical security of the NIE's themselves and leery about sending NIE's to Congressional staff assistants, who might be prone to leak intelligence information. Colby was hesitant about absolute rules in this regard and suggested that briefings be handled orally whenever appropriate. He added, however, that the CIA could adjust to any changes in Congressional procedures on this matter.

c. The Relationship of Intelligence to Foreign Policy

Mr. Colby suggested that the CIA should maintain a certain distance from the foreign policy process -- providing assessments of foreign situations but not casting a vote for a particular policy. Dr. Kissinger regularly requires

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an intelligence briefing before meetings of the Washington Special Action Group. After that, Colby says no more.

Colby added that the President reads intelligence daily briefs and other material. Furthermore, Colby can see the President any time he wants (as of November, he had seen him on intelligence matters three or four times).

Dean Wilcox asked whether Colby received ample reports on the discussions of the President and Dr. Kissinger with high level foreign officials. Colby said he personally is privy to the general line and must levy requirements on the intelligence community without giving any details.

d. Organization of the Intelligence Community

When asked about the extent of his own authority, Mr. Colby described his role in the community. As DCI, he chairs the U.S. Intelligence Board, the Intelligence Resources Advisory Committee, and various other committees that pass on certain sensitive collection programs. Colby also has the last word on National Intelligence Estimates. He is, in short, the President's principal intelligence advisor...the only one who regularly attends meetings of the various NSC subcommittees, the WASAG, the 40 Committee, and the Cabinet. Colby is also Vice-Chairman of the NSC Intelligence Committee, which is designed to solicit the views of intelligence consumers.

Colby said that relations between the intelligence agencies used to be competitive, but now are maturing. There are, however, "many areas in which we can work together much better," e.g. in coordinating the activities of military attachés. Colby explained that different agencies have to be involved in the process of collecting information. Foreign Service Officers and attachés have unique contacts abroad and can collect a lot of information overtly. The CIA's job is to collect information clandestinely that cannot be collected any other way.

Colby admitted that there was some overlap in functions, but that this was often deliberate. Thus the CIA's office of Strategic Research takes an independent look at basic military questions. Furthermore, each agency or Department head insists on having his own intelligence support. Said Colby, "when I go to the President with an assessment of some new Soviet missile...I have to be assured that I am right...and not just parrot what a particular agency says." There is also a distinction

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between national intelligence (in support of foreign policy) and departmental intelligence (in support of individual departments and agencies). DIA, for example, contributes to national intelligence but also serves the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense.

Colby pointed out that the total number of people in the intelligence business is going down sharply and will continue to do so. It has to be because of sharp annual increases in personnel costs.

Colby said it was useful to have analysts, collectors, and operators all under one roof. He likes experts in one field talking to experts in another, and not hiding in their ivory towers. The National Intelligence Officers (NIO's - successors to the Board of National Estimates) cut across functional lines within the bureaucracy and thus get the best brains working on any given problem. The NIOs are real specialists in their fields (and not generalists like the former Board of National Estimates).

When asked what organizational changes he would recommend, Colby said that he would like the authority to deter someone from getting sensitive information out, then spilling it (e.g., the Mardeletti/Marks Case). When asked about the National Security Act of 1947, Colby recommended that the word "foreign" be put before the word "intelligence," so the public would be reassured about the limits of CIA authority.

e. The Relationship of CIA Personnel to Ambassadors

Mr. Colby referred to letters written by Presidents Kennedy and Nixon to all Ambassadors, saying that the CIA representative was subject to the Ambassador's overall direction. There is also an agreement between the CIA and the State Department that all substantive intelligence acquired in a country would be made available to the Ambassador, and that he is to be informed of operations in that country. Colby said that the CIA's relationships with Ambassadors are now very good, but that the CIA's obligation to keep Ambassadors informed about operations does not apply to the rest of the Embassy staff.

f. The Relationship of the CIA to U.S. Corporations

Mr. Colby, when asked about the CIA's connection with ITT, said that the CIA will not expend someone else's money and can only operate on appropriated funds.

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The CIA does, however, have some employees pretending to work for some corporations. These are generally known to the management. There is also a limited exchange of information - "mutual backscratching" - between the CIA and some corporations.

g. Covert Action

Mr. Colby said that covert action overseas was a valuable tool that had been at times overused. In the 1950's, for example, there was a "missionary feeling" about these operations and a sense that "we had to go out and fight every fight around the world. Obviously we have a different policy now, a much more reserved policy."

On the subject of controls over covert action, Colby said that "we don't do this without getting very specific instructions from the NSC," via the 40 Committee (an interagency group chaired by Dr. Kissinger). If the CIA is asked to carry out some covert action or believes one should be carried out, it will write a paper describing the problem and what needs to be done. This paper is then circulated to the members of the 40 Committee, who either get together to discuss it or sign off on the program by telephone. It then goes to the President for approval.

When asked whether Congress is also informed, Colby said that budgetary details are discussed with the appropriations committees and general plans are discussed with the Armed Services Committees. All significant operations are described.

h. Paramilitary Operations: The Laos Example

Mr. Colby described the CIA's role in Laos as an effort to carry out policy in non-attributable, non-official, non-military terms. "Obviously it got to be a very noisy war," but "so long as you don't confront the other side with the necessity of reacting because of your open approach to a problem...that is accepted." When asked about the negative reaction of many Americans to CIA involvement in Laos, Colby replied, "I think it is a good thing, because the pressure is such that it requires you to operate secretly only where there is a very good reason. And, if there isn't a good reason, you just don't do that in our society, and that is fine."

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i. Indo China in General

Senator Mansfield said that, in his opinion, the best intelligence reports on Vietnam were furnished by the CIA, and it was too bad that these reports were not given proper attention by the administration.

Senator Mansfield asked whether the CIA played a part in the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk. Colby said that "Sihanouk is under an understandable misapprehension that we tried to overthrow him in 1959... A General in the Cambodian Army did try to overthrow him... we had one officer who was in contact with an associate of that General for intelligence purposes, because we were curious as to what was going on... As to his overthrow in 1970, we did not have anything to do with it."

When asked about the drug traffic in the Golden Triangle, Colby said that the CIA has tried to keep itself from being involved in the drug traffic in that area and has vigorously worked against it. "The Meo in Laos did produce opium. We supported the Meo against the North Vietnamese. We, however, spent a good deal of our effort to get them out of the opium business. The CIA also has caught a few drug traffickers and closed down some refineries."